

Mauritius

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Mauritius are unavailable.³⁰²⁴ Children are usually found working in the informal sector including work with street traders and other small businesses, in restaurants and in agriculture.³⁰²⁵ On the island of Rodrigues, children reportedly work as domestic servants in third-party homes, on farms and in shops.³⁰²⁶ Child prostitution occurs in Mauritius.³⁰²⁷ The country is a source country for children internally trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation.³⁰²⁸

The Education Act provides for compulsory schooling up to the age of 16. Education is free up to the tertiary level.³⁰²⁹ The government also subsidizes school fees for 4-year old children to ensure that students begin primary school with at least one year of preschool education.³⁰³⁰ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 104 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 97 percent.³⁰³¹ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance.

Primary school attendance statistics are not available for Mauritius.³⁰³² As of 2001, 99 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade five.³⁰³³ In 2004, 63 percent of students who took part in the Certificate of Primary Education Exam passed.³⁰³⁴

³⁰²⁴ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

³⁰²⁵ Embassy of Mauritius official, survey questionnaire response to USDOL official, September 2004.

³⁰²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Mauritius*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27739.htm>.

³⁰²⁷ Ibid.

³⁰²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Mauritius*, Washington, D.C., June 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33189.htm>, (Mauritius).http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp (Mauritius), ILO, *Individual Observation concerning Convention no. 29, Forced Labor, 1930 Mauritius (ratification: 1969)*, ILO-Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Geneva, 2002; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>.

³⁰²⁹ Ministry of Education website: www.gov.mu/portal/site/education and Embassy of Mauritius official, Child Labor Questionnaire response, September 2004.

³⁰³⁰ UNESCO, *Education for All 2000 Assessments: Country Reports - Mauritius*, prepared by Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 52/84; available from <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/mauritius/contents.html>.

³⁰³¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios, Primary; accessed October 2005).

³⁰³² This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report.

³⁰³³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=55> (School life expectancy, % of repeaters, survival rates; accessed December 2005).

³⁰³⁴ Central Statistical Office website: <http://statsmauritius.gov.mu>

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act of 1975 sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years.³⁰³⁵ Young persons between the ages of 15 and 18 are not allowed to work in activities that are harmful to health, dangerous, or otherwise unsuitable for a young person. The Occupational Safety, Health, and Welfare Act of 1988 prohibits young persons who have not been fully instructed and have not been adequately supervised from being required to operate dangerous machinery.³⁰³⁶ The Protection of the Child (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1998 prohibits the handling of explosives by minors.³⁰³⁷ The Merchant Shipping Act makes provisions for the health and safety of children working aboard ships.³⁰³⁸

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Mauritius. The Criminal Code contains provisions prohibiting child prostitution, the keeping of brothels where children are prostituted, the corruption of youth, and the sale, trafficking, and abduction of children.³⁰³⁹ The Constitution prohibits forced labor and slavery and there is no system of military conscription.³⁰⁴⁰ Since 1999, the Government of Mauritius has submitted to the ILO a list or an equivalent document identifying the types of work that it has determined are harmful to the health, safety or morals of children under Convention 182 or Convention 138.³⁰⁴¹

The Ministry of Labor and Industrial Relations and Employment (MLIRE) enforces child labor laws.³⁰⁴² Child labor inspections are carried out in the course of routine labor inspection visits.³⁰⁴³ Persons identified as employing children receive a verbal warning. Subsequently, surprise site visits are undertaken to ensure compliance. If recurrence is discovered, written warnings are issued. As a last recourse, criminal action is initiated. Convicted offenders may be fined up to 2,000 rupees (USD 68) and subject to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year.³⁰⁴⁴ In 2003, the government established a Tourism Police Force to monitor for trafficking in tourist sites and identify victims of the sex tourism trade.³⁰⁴⁵ The U.S. Department of State reports that Mauritius' anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts increased dramatically during 2005.³⁰⁴⁶

³⁰³⁵ Embassy of Mauritius official, Child Labor Questionnaire response, September 2004.

³⁰³⁶ Dr. U. Jeetah Mauritius Embassy official, survey questionnaire response to USDOL official, September 2004.

³⁰³⁷ *Protection of the Child (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1998*, (August 18, 2004); available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.byCountry?p_lang=en.

³⁰³⁸ R. Sukon Mauritius Embassy official, survey questionnaire response to USDOL official, August 12, 2004.

³⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*, ILO, *Individual Observation- Convention 29*.

³⁰⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Mauritius*, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios, Primary).

³⁰⁴¹ ILO-IPEC official, email communication to USDOL official, November 14, 2005.

³⁰⁴² U.S. Embassy- Port Louis, *unclassified telegram no. 658*, August 18, 2003.

³⁰⁴³ ILO, *Individual Observation concerning Convention no. 138, Minimum Age, 1973 Mauritius (ratification: 1990)*, ILO-Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Geneva, 2004; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newcountryframeE.htm>.

³⁰⁴⁴ U.S. Embassy- Port Louis, *unclassified telegram no. 658*.

³⁰⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Mauritius*.

³⁰⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Mauritius*, Washington, DC, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005>.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Mauritius has an Office of Ombudsperson for Children. The Ombudsperson promotes compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and protects the rights of children, including the investigation of suspected cases of child labor.³⁰⁴⁷ The National Children's Council, under the authority of the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development (MFWWCD), coordinates efforts between governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide for the welfare and protection of children.³⁰⁴⁸ The Child Development Unit, also under the MFWWCD, is responsible for advocating for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring the enforcement of the Child Protection Act, and promoting child welfare legislation.³⁰⁴⁹

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified ILO Convention 138 09/21/1999	✓
Ratified ILO Convention 182 06/14/2002	✓
ILO-IPEC Member	✓
National Plan for Children	
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan (Trafficking)	✓

The government has a National Plan of Action on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse including Commercial Sexual Exploitation.³⁰⁵⁰ In 2005, funding was granted to increase the manpower and mobility of the Minors Brigade (the police unit responsible for investigating cases of children in prostitution) from 5 to 25 officers and from 1 to 5 vehicles. In 2003, the Mauritius Family Planning Association, in collaboration with the MFWWCD, opened a "Drop-In Center" for child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.³⁰⁵¹ The MFWWCD implements a Child Watch Network to coordinate NGOs and professionals working with children to detect cases of child abuse, including child prostitution.³⁰⁵² The Ministry has collaborated with the Mauritian Police Force to conduct training for NGOs on combating commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Ministry of Tourism seeks to discourage child prostitution in tourist destinations through workshops to facilitate information sharing. Government officials have spoken publicly on the topic of commercial sexual exploitation of children, and according to the U.S. Department of State, have implemented outreach in schools and training for law enforcement and community leaders.³⁰⁵³

Through the Education Priority Zones program, the Ministry of Education has made efforts to improve the performance of low achieving schools in less developed areas.³⁰⁵⁴ The government has also introduced a national Literacy Strategy to ensure that every child leaving primary school has achieved the appropriate level of literacy and numeracy.³⁰⁵⁵ Various projects have been introduced to integrate out-of-school children into the school system.³⁰⁵⁶ In addition, the Industrial and Vocational Training Board

³⁰⁴⁷ *Ombudsperson for Children Act*, (November 10, 2003); available from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.byCountry?p_lang=en.

³⁰⁴⁸ *Protection of the Child (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1998*.

³⁰⁴⁹ Ministry of Women, Family Welfare, and Child Development of Mauritius, *Children's Development Unit*, [online] [cited September 27, 2004]; available from <http://women.gov.mu/child/sscdu.htm>.

³⁰⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Mauritius*.

³⁰⁵¹ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁵² Ministry of Women, Family Welfare, and Child Development of Mauritius, *Childwatch*, [online] [cited September 27, 2004]; available from <http://women.gov.mu/child/sschildwatch.htm>.

³⁰⁵³ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2005: Mauritius*.

³⁰⁵⁴ Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, *From Special Support Schools to 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires': A New Strategy Built on Partnerships*, June 2002; available from <http://ncb.intnet.mu/education/newstat.htm>, Mauritius Embassy official, Child Labor Questionnaire response, September 2004.

³⁰⁵⁵ Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*, February 2003; available from <http://ncb.intnet.mu/education/natlit.htm>.

³⁰⁵⁶ ILO, *Individual Observation- Convention 29*.

provides preparatory courses for primary school drop-outs between the ages of 12 to 14 years at pre-vocational Training Centers.³⁰⁵⁷

³⁰⁵⁷ Mauritius Embassy official, Child Labor Questionnaire response, September 2004.